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Book Notices.

SEMITIC INSCRIPTIONS.¹

This handsome volume contains all the Semitic epigraphical material, of whatever nature, which was found by the American expedition which explored northern central Syria in 1899-1900. The inscriptions, for the most part hitherto unpublished, number 232 in all, being distributed as follows: Syriac, 24; Palmyrene, 14; Nabatean, 3; mediæval Hebrew, 10; Safaitic, 136; Arabic (Mohammedan), 45. The districts represented are northern central Syria, Palmyra, and the region of the Ḥaurān. The editor and publishers of this material have spared neither pains nor expense, and the result of their labors is at once a delight to the book-lover and a satisfaction to the student. The volume is beautifully printed in large type, on heavy paper with wide margins. The numerous illustrations, including photographs and original drawings of monuments and inscriptions, are generally excellent. Each inscription is given first in a usable facsimile reproduction, and then in transliteration and translation followed by a sufficiently full commentary.

The publication is a notable one, and will receive a hearty welcome on both sides of the ocean. The study of Semitic epigraphy has gained ground rapidly of late, and the importance of these scattered and often fragmentary documents for the history of the civilization, language, and religion of the peoples of which they testify is much more widely recognized now than was the case a few decades ago. Moreover, this is the first important treatise, in the field of West-Semitic epigraphy, which this country has produced, and the fact should lend it added interest, at least on this side of the Atlantic. The American expedition was fortunate in having Dr. Littmann, now of Princeton University, for its Semitic epigraphist. The work of preparing and editing such inscriptions as these is one of great difficulty, and calls for an unusual combination of qualities. The number of those scholars—even such as are otherwise well equipped—who are able to make satisfactory copies of such documents is surprisingly small; and when it comes to the interpretation, a thorough knowledge of a half-dozen Semitic languages is only one of several prime requisites. In the present volume all these requirements are admirably met, as the expert reader will soon convince himself. Each separate monument is located, and carefully described, with exact measurements. The facsimile drawings are models of their kind; one soon learns that they are as near to being absolutely trustworthy as in the nature of the case is possible for such reproductions. In the inter-

¹ SEMITIC INSCRIPTIONS. By Enno Littmann, Ph.D. Part IV of the "Publications of an American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899-1900." Pp. xiii+230. New York: *The Century Co.*, 1904.

pretation of the documents, ingenuity and sound common-sense are most happily combined with philological training; and in the appended commentary, in each case, there is brought together, from a wide acquaintance with the manifold literature, whatever could throw light on the meaning of the inscription under discussion and aid it in contributing to our knowledge of the times and conditions in which it originated. In his study of the principal part of the material, moreover, Dr. Littmann has had the benefit of the counsel of some of the best European epigraphists. It is true that not many of the inscriptions, taken singly, are of high intrinsic importance; on the other hand, the number of those which make some real contribution to our knowledge of ancient Syria is not small. In the case of the Syriac and Safaitic inscriptions especially, the importance of the collection as a whole—quite irrespective of the individual worth of its members—as an aid to any future investigations in the field is at once apparent. In short, this volume of *Semitic Inscriptions* is one in which the members and promoters of the American expedition of 1899–1900 may well take pride, and on the achievement of which Dr. Littmann especially is to be warmly congratulated.

Among the Syriac inscriptions, that of Khirbit Ḥasan (p. 15) is interesting for the glimpse of social conditions which it gives us, as well as for the fact that it is engraved on the lintel of a church portal, and constituted the official record of the completion of the building. At that time (507 A. D.), at least, the language of church and state in this district, as well as the speech of the common people, was Syriac. As hardly any Syriac inscriptions had hitherto been found west of the Euphrates, the discovery of so many new ones by this expedition is an interesting fact. Dr. Littmann discusses on pp. 4 *sq.* the evidence of a revival of the use of Syriac for official documents in the sixth century, and suggests as one chief reason the nationalist movement connected with the founding of the Monophysite church. On pp. 23 *sqq.* is translated and discussed the now famous Dêhes inscription, at which so many scholars have tried their hand. The reading here given, which contains several new features, will undoubtedly stand as the correct one. In this, as in several of the most important inscriptions of this group, the mode of writing is very interesting, the letters being made to run from left to right (in imitation of the Greek) by separating them and turning them half-way over. Here, as elsewhere, the characters are of the Estrangelo type, and generally well formed. For artistic beauty, however, the letters of the fragmentary inscription on p. 32 stand quite alone. The Zebed inscriptions (pp. 47–56), brief as they are, are highly interesting. The use of the word 𐤀 as the *nota accusativi*, in the first of these, is remarkable. The reading can hardly be called certain, but it is extremely probable. Dr. Littmann urges with good right that this western dialect had distinct usages of its own.

Of the Palmyrene monuments, the one (pp. 70 *sqq.*) dedicated to Shai' al-Qaum, the good god “who does not drink wine,” easily bears off the honors. The document is interesting and important in many particulars, but especially for the evidence which it affords of a reaction of

the Arab element of the population, with its sober and simple habit of life, against the prevailing cult of the Aramæan Dionysus. This same god—always a North-Arabian divinity—also appears in the Safaitic inscriptions, as **שֵׁהּ הַקֵּס**, and in a Nabataean inscription published by Dussaud and Macler. As a specimen of Palmyrene calligraphy, furthermore, this inscription deserves notice. It is already well known to scholars, since Dr. Littmann published it in the *Journal asiatique* in 1901, and it has since been included in Cooke's *North Semitic Inscriptions*. In commenting on the phrase **אֱלֹהֵא קִרְשֵׁא**, "the holy god," in No. 14, Dr. Littmann expresses the opinion (p. 83) that it is "due to Jewish or even Christian influence." It seems to me that this conclusion is hardly justified. Such phrases as this and the frequent **בִּרְךְ שְׁמֵהּ לְעַלְמֵא** might be expected to arise in any part of the Semitic world where civilization and religious observances had made considerable progress. The Phœnicians termed their gods "holy" (**קִדְשִׁי**), as we know from both the Eshmun'azar and Bod-'Ashtart inscriptions.

As was to be expected, this expedition found only a few Nabataean monuments; the few gleanings, however, were of very considerable importance. At Si', in the Ḥaurān, is the ruin of a notable Nabataean temple dedicated to Baal Samīn. Here five fragments of an inscription had been found at different times by previous explorers, though no satisfactory reading had been gained from any one of them, and it was not certainly known that they belonged together. Dr. Littmann had the good fortune to discover two more fragments, and by joining them to the others with admirable ingenuity and skill has been able to restore the document which commemorated the chief builder of the temple. Both the beginning and the end are preserved, and the restoration is entirely convincing, except at the one point where it becomes necessary to supply a missing piece by conjecture. Another monument found near Si' by the expedition, the mortuary stele reproduced on p. 90, is important palæographically and from the fact that it bears the very early date 308 *aer. Sel.*, = 5 B. C.

The mediæval Hebrew inscriptions, found at Kefr il-Bārah and Tēdif, are of minor importance. The Safaitic inscriptions and graffiti, on the other hand, occupy a large part of the book (pp. 102-68), and present many features of interest. The unexpected information—little though it is—which these brief scrawls have given us in regard to an otherwise all but unknown North-Arabian civilization is most welcome. On pp. 104-29 Dr. Littmann, who has been one of the pioneers in the work of deciphering the Safaitic inscriptions, gives an excellent summary of our present knowledge of the people who made them, under the headings: the writing; the alphabet; the people and their inscriptions; the date of the inscriptions; the gods; the language; the names. There are here many items of interest for the student of Semitic religion, customs, and language. Among the inscriptions which follow, No. 37 is especially interesting palæographically, because of the close approximation of its characters in form to those of the South-Arabian alphabet.

read **מַעַל**? The form of the **ס** in the two Mektebeh inscriptions is almost exactly the same as this, and the phrase **מַעַל מַעְהָה** **לְחַדְעָה**, "his memory continued as a blessing," is entirely idiomatic. The inscription was made after Rabbula's death, as the **א** (so the first word should evidently be read) also indicates.

P. 59: Would the traces still remaining on the stone permit the reading (in ll. 3 sq.): **מִן דִּי שְׁפָרָה לְהוֹן** | **וְדִי קָרַב**? This would relieve the difficulty as to the number of letters missing at the beginning of l. 4 (see pp. 60 sq.).

P. 63: Is the phrase **לְמִיבְנָה דִּי דִּיכְלָה** (l. 5) grammatically justifiable? The traces shown by the fac-simile do not seem to me to indicate **לְמִיבְנָה**, moreover. But of course this reproduction is a treacherous guide.

P. 83: The reading **תְּרִי** = *θρόνος* can hardly be right. Aside from the unusual form, the word is altogether out of place here, as Dr. Littmann himself remarks. I would suggest **מִרְי** as a possibility. The letter **ת** in this alphabet is an **מ** with the right-hand stroke cut away. The mistake may have been due to the stone-cutter himself, or (more probably) to a defect in the pattern which he copied. The document would then read: ". . . for Him whose name is blessed for ever, the good and merciful one, *our lord*, the holy god." Cf. the inscriptions in Cooke, *North-Semitic Inscriptions*, pp. 295 sq., where Baal-Samin is called **מִרְא עֲלִמָּה**.

P. 85: As was remarked above, Dr. Littmann's ingenious restoration of the temple inscription at Si' is convincing except at one point. The phrase **וְחֻעֵד דִּיִּי בְשָׁלָם** (his reading of the last fragment, lettered H) is hardly translatable, and could not easily be rendered: "and he departed from life in peace." The most natural way of treating **דִּיִּי** is to regard it as a descriptive or predicate adjective; and in that case we must suppose that some other person or persons, presumably belonging to the family of Maleikat, had just been mentioned. Is it not probable that we do have the ending of such a name, **עֲרִי** [ע], in the letters immediately preceding the **עֵד**? For example: ". . . he and his brother Ghauthû (while) yet living." The lost fragment, G, was probably longer than is here supposed.

P. 90: I can see no valid objection to reading **וְהוּא אֶתְחַתְּהָ** **דִּי**, "he and his wife," in l. 8 of the inscription. It is easy to imagine how the wife might have been honored by mention on the monument, as one who had helped to erect it, although the *expense* had been borne entirely by the husband.

In the Safaitic inscriptions, several of the words which occur more than once seem to call for further discussion. For **בִּיטִי** (Nos. 12, 17, 23) it seems to me that "he was riding" (not on foot), cf. **أَمْطَى**, etc.; or simply "he arrived, passed this way," the *Syriac* **ܥܬܝ**, would suit better than "he made a hurried (or long) journey."

No. 17 is extremely difficult, and perhaps no one can propose any

better solution than the one given here. Still, it is tempting to regard סנה as the beginning of an expression which gave the document a sort of date. May not the following ם have been mistakenly written for ה? Observe how very slight is the difference between the two letters in this same inscription. The word following סנה would in that case be בהה (i. e., בִּיעֵה), and the next might possibly be רִזְן (רוּז), "gardens." But it is perhaps useless to add such conjectures as these.

In No. 110, the word נגע can hardly mean "sought for (found?) pasturage." It is found in *four* inscriptions (collected here), always just following the words: "A found the inscription of (his friend or relative) B." The coincidence cannot be accidental; the word נגע must express either the result or some attendant circumstance of A's discovery. Its meaning might be "he rejoiced," or "he wished good luck (to B)," or "he (A) was well and prosperous (at the time when he found the writing)." The verb נגַע meets these requirements satisfactorily, for it is a synonym of הִנֵּה, and might have any one of the three meanings just given. The second of them, "he invoked good fortune (or, good health) for him," is perhaps the most probable. Observe, too, that the adverb כִּבֵּר, "much," "very," which follows the word in two of the four inscriptions, is now quite in place.

I cannot see that the meaning of הִרְצֵה is determined by the picture which accompanies No. 134, even when the other inscriptions containing the word are compared. The *n. pr.* קַעֲצֵה might even be the *subject* of the verb; in fact, the inscription and the picture are much more likely to have been made by the one who remained on the spot than by the one who "fled." It is not evident that the horseman in the drawing is "piercing" the standing figure; the latter may be warding off the thrust. It is not safe to draw conclusions from such an artistic effort as this one. Elsewhere in this volume the word הִרְצֵה occurs in Nos. 59 and 120, neither of which has thus far been satisfactorily translated. In No. 59 the necessity of giving the words פִּהֲלַת סֶלֶם their usual meaning can hardly be avoided; they should not be separated for any reason short of a certainty. Both here and in No. 134 the word הִרְצֵה follows the invocation of the god, perhaps by a mere coincidence. In l. 3 of No. 59, הִרְצֵה and הִל are printed without the point over the ה—the only misprints which I have noticed in the whole book. Other phrases in which the word occurs are noted on p. 120; it does not seem to me that the meaning "pierce" is justified anywhere.

P. 180: The reading is very difficult. Dr. Littmann gives (tentatively):
 بِسْمِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى | هَذَا الْبَيْتُ لِعَبْدِ اللَّهِ | بَنِ زِيَادِ بْنِ الدِّينِ
 | بَنِ مُحَمَّدٍ | سَنَةِ أَرْبَعٍ وَثَلَاثُمِائَةٍ
 I confess that I am unable to see more than half of these words in the facsimile, and some of them seem to me to be impossible. I would read (also tentatively): هَذَا | أَنْتُمْ

البَابَ لِحَمدِ اللهِ تعالى | زياد بن بهلق العديم فتمّ في | شهر
 [ربيع] الأوّل سنة سبع وثلاثمائة “There completed this door, to the
 praise of God Most High, Ziyād ibn Bihliq(?), the poor (sinner); and it
 was finished in the month [Rabi'] the former, in the year 307.”

P. 193: The first line might perhaps be deciphered: **خلد بعبارة**
 الكرم فمات بأمرك, “He dwelt in the abode from which man must
 return, and died by Thy command.”

P. 195: The inscription of which Drs. Littmann and van Berchem
 offer no interpretation. If I am not mistaken, this is a verse in the
Kāmil meter. It might be read:

كَافِ الْكَرِيمِ وَكُنْ لِعِزِّكَ صَائِبًا
 وَصِلِ اللَّيِّمَ وَمِثْلَهُ فَتَنْصَبِ

“Requite (with generosity) the generous man, and you will achieve power;
 “Bestow gifts also on the mean man and his kind, and then (you can)
 stand secure!”

There are a few things here which call for comment; several slightly
 different readings are possible, and at least one different interpretation.
 But limitations of space forbid any discussion of details here. Professor
 Nöldeke, to whom I submitted my conjecture, wrote: “Dass hier ein Vers
 im *Kāmil* ist, leidet wohl kaum Zweifel”; and it was he who proposed
وصل and **ومثله** in place of inferior readings which I had suggested.

P. 196: The undeciphered word in No. 21, last line, is **المتأمر**. Is
 not the first proper name, both in this inscription and in No. 22, **على**
 instead of **صلى**? Compare the form of the letter on p. 214, l. 1, of the
 facsimile. I would suggest this reading for No. 22: **أمر على بن | حدّ**
الآلى بالله, “‘Alī ibn Ḥadd ordered (this to be written). With
 God is the religion of the powerless.” Cf. especially No. 21.

P. 214, l. 3 must be read: **ولا حَيْدَ من مَوْفاه**, “And there is no
 turning aside from His place of recompense”; cf. Sura 50:18. Line 5
 does not contain a proper name, but 4 *sq.* should be read: **وَكُتِبَ هذا**
مسكين. With the phrase **الذكر | إنّ الذكر** ينفع المؤمنين
ذليل العباد in the later graffito below might be compared **العباد**,
 “of ignoble origin,” Belādhuri 241, 6. It is certainly not easy to say
 how the two following words, **عبيد الجياد**, should be disposed of;
 but could they in any case be rendered, “the good servant”? It seems

to me probable that the last word was intended to be pronounced *الْجَمَاد*, and was a vulgar formation from the adjective *جَد*. This rhyming signature would then have the usual tenor: "The man low in station, the servant of the Bountiful One."

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BABEL UND BIBEL.¹

Ernest Sellin, professor of Old Testament exegesis and archæology of the Imperial University at Vienna, wrote in 1903 the following words:² "The fundamental principles of all morality, 'for I desire mercy and not sacrifice; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' have absolutely no counterpart in Babylon." This is a fair specimen of the groundlessness of attacks made by reactionary scholars against the historical and theological revelations of the Babylonian literature. It has remained for Professor Delitzsch, in his latest popular work *Babel und Bibel*, III, to demonstrate beyond all shadow of a doubt that this statement of Sellin is utterly false.

Hidden in the British Museum are scores of clay tablets which now permit us to get a clear insight into the moral and religious thought of the nobler-minded higher class among the ancient Babylonians. Here we read many proverbs which absolutely set at naught Professor Sellin's prejudiced assertions. The Babylonian religionist was strictly admonished to love, and not to despise, his neighbor, to give him food and drink when needy, and even to treat considerably those whose lot had fallen in slavery. We learn, furthermore, that the Babylonians' God was love, that virtue and right living were not the special gift of one people alone, but that the mercy of God extended as far as the clouds, and the reflection of his glory was to be found in all human hearts (p. 22). Delitzsch points out in this connection that Sellin's words can be refuted from the biblical Book of Kings itself, which closes with the account of a gracious act on the part of the Babylonian king Evilmerodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar, who voluntarily released the captive Judean monarch from his Babylonian prison.

It is hardly necessary to refer to the Hammurabi laws, now well known to all Assyriologists, to show how loving care was prescribed for sick women, widows, and orphans, or to demonstrate how gentleness was commanded toward the poor debtor. Last, but not least, in this connection, it was ordered that every chance should be given the wayward son before his father had the right to cast him off utterly. It can certainly

¹ BABEL UND BIBEL. Dritter (Schluss) Vortrag. Von Friedrich Delitzsch. Mit 21 Abbildungen. Delivered before the Literarische Gesellschaften at Barmen (Cologne) October 27-28, 1904, and before the Verein für Geographie und Statistik at Frankfort-am-Main, November 9, 1904.

² "Ein Schlusswort zu Babel und Bibel," *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung für Oesterreich*, July 15, 1903.